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ABSTRACT

The author provides a comprehensive overview of trends in private school growth and enrollments, and defines the issues surrounding the controversy between private and public schools in Alberta, Canada. Statistical information about numbers of private schools in Alberta, their funding, and the makeup of their students was obtained from Alberta provincial studies; views regarding private schools were also obtained through questionnaires sent to 42 private schools, 61 parents of private-school students, and 54 public school boards in Alberta. Statistics show that the number of private schools increased during 1978-81, as did the number of private-school students. The increase was caused by religiously oriented private schools, which increased their enrollments over 60 percent from 1976 to 1983. Private-school parents reported that they enrolled their children for more Christian education than could be found in public schools. Responses from public school boards indicate that they generally accept the existence of private schools as a political reality but note a potential problem in continuing sufficient funding of public schools while private schools are also receiving government grants. (JW)

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The Private School Movement in Alberta

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Private schools have had their place in Alberta throughout the history of the province. A major impetus to the private school movement followed the influx of immigrants from the Netherlands who brought with them a strong private school orientation. Additional denominational groups have sought to provide a particular kind of education for their children which cannot characterize the program of a public school serving a pluralistic society. Specific nondenominational needs have been met by nonsectarian or secular private schools. The flexibility of school legislation governing the establishment of private schools and the increasing government grants to such schools have raised concerns among the supporters of the public school system.

The Alberta School Trustees' Association Task Force on Private Schools was established on December 1, 1979. In January 1980 the Task Force engaged the writer to prepare a report on private schools in Alberta. The research reported here includes that which was completed during the preparation of that report (Bergen, 1980).

The object of this paper is to examine the trends in private school growth and enrollments, and the concerns of private school supporters as well as those of public school boards. In order to provide a comprehensive setting for these developments, a review of selected literature is given and the legal status and the financing of private schools are briefly described.

For the purpose of this paper a *private school* is a school other than one under the governance of a public or a separate school board or of a provincial or federal government department. Schools offering postsecondary education are not included.

In Alberta, separate schools, most of which are Catholic, are an integral part of the provincial school system. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the term *public*

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EA 016 476

school includes public and separate schools. Similarly, public school board (or district board) refers to both public and separate boards.

Private schools may be secular or nonsectarian. In this paper the term *secular* will be used. Private schools may also be religious (denominational or nondenominational). The term *nonsecular* will be used in general reference to such schools. At this time all nonsecular private schools in Alberta espouse Christianity. This, however, does not imply that any of the secular private schools are necessarily non-Christian. Quite to the contrary, several of them are characterized by a Christian ethos but are not affiliated with any denominational or other religious association or organization.

Review of Literature

The question as to whether schooling ought to be private or public was not of interest to parents during colonial times (Kraushaar, 1976, p. 7). Substantial public financing of private schools is found to be generally acceptable in European countries such as Germany, France and Holland (Goldschmidt & Roeder, 1979) and in Australia (*Australian Students and Their Schools*, 1979). Although private schools do not receive government grants in the United States, an increase in the private school sector has roused the concern of public school supporters (Butts, 1979; Park, 1980) while the freedom of parents to choose alternatives also has found articulated support (Coons, 1979; Morris, 1980).

Podmore (1977) pointed out that, except for Sweden and Norway, Canada had the smallest private secondary sector in the modern industrial nations of the West. A brief survey regarding the regulations governing private schools in the provinces was made by Phillipson (1979). Some of the early private schools which have survived tend to be elitist, or at least costly for those who attend them (Gossage, 1977). In a study of six private schools in Winnipeg, VanderStoel (1979) refuted the commonly held misconceptions that private schools are attended by the rich exclusively or for religious reasons only. With respect to private schools in Quebec, Bezeau (1979) stated that they "have recruited students from all levels of society, but the upper social and economic levels are more heavily represented" (p. 39). His study also showed that for 1973-74, 4% of the private school enrollment was induced to leave, 46% of these for academic reasons, and that 71% of those who left returned to the public schools.

In a nation-wide American study, Coleman (1981, p. 159) has claimed to have evidence that higher achievement and aspirations are found for students in Catholic independent (private) schools than for students in public schools from comparable family backgrounds. However, the reported findings have been disputed by Page and Keith (1981). Countering the argument that private schools produce intolerant attitudes, Landyski (1972) claimed that there was no evidence that those who came through private schools were any less tolerant than those who came through public schools.

A British Columbia study has been launched in order to ascertain the consequence of funding independent schools. The first phase of the study indicated that greater commitment on the part of the teachers, parents, and students was found in private schools than in public schools (Erickson, MacDonald & Manley-Casimir, 1979). Bullen, who recently became inspector of Independent Schools for the British Columbia Ministry of Education, believed that if independent schools live up to the trust placed in them, "in time a level of

political and social maturity may be reached where the freedom to choose schools will be as valued in B.C. as the other freedoms which set aside the free democracies from totalitarian states" (Bullen, 1978, p. 30). In a similar vein, Edmonds, writing in defence of the private school, referred to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which "it is categorically stated that parents have the right to decide the kind of education their children should have" (1981, p. 21).

Some of the advantages of private schools — such as a greater measure of institutional self-determination, academic discipline, and greater instructor-student interaction — have been pointed out also by Ditchburn (1975) and Wilkinson (1976). However, the advantageous settings these writers describe are generally not accessible to students whose parents cannot afford the tuition rates. The Canadian Association of Independent Schools, formed in October 1979, encompasses about sixty such prestigious schools (The Canadian Headmasters' Association, 1980). Membership is restricted to nonprofit institutions "graduating students into university" (Troubetzkoy, 1982).

The Parent Commission (Quebec, 1966) and the McFarlane Commission (Manitoba, 1959) appear to have been the only royal commissions on education to have favored a measure of public support for private schools. Substantial support became an immediate reality in Quebec; however, minimal support in Manitoba was not introduced until 1978.

The Cameron Commission held that private schools were to exist without cost to the taxpayer (Alberta, 1959, p. 257). A warning note was contained in the Worth Report that the growth in private schools might also lead to a degree of "educational and social fragmentation" (Alberta, 1972, p. 61).

Mazurek discussed trends towards "regionalism" in education — "formal regionalism," such as is exemplified by Quebec school legislation designed to perpetuate the French language and culture, and "informal regionalism" as illustrated by the decisions of Alberta Holdeman Mennonites to gain more control over the education of their children by establishing their own private schools (1980, p. 10). Friesen proposed a case for an "education mosaic" in which public education would accommodate cultural differences for Canada's minority groups "offering a full range of choices in philosophical outlook, school content, and teaching approach" (1981, p. 21). Bergen suggested that the challenge for public school authorities "may not be one of opposing or actively retarding private school developments, but rather one of working out appropriate controls and even symbiotic arrangements" (1981, p. 8).

In contrast to the foregoing positions, Chalmers in a "post-mortem on public schools" (fictitiously dated December 1989) outlined the darkest of possible futures in which public education in Alberta is abolished and the concerns of the Department are limited to the supervision of private schools "and other such establishments" (1980, p. 24).

Earlier Alberta studies on private education included that of Ronning (1942) who suggested that district boards might pay the tuition fees of students attending private schools. Smith (1949) surmised that protestant private schools were making a positive contribution but that their programs did not contain elements which could readily be adopted by public schools. Miller (1957) held that public schools did not meet the educational needs of Seventh Day Adventists. Cook (1958) explained that the Mormons preferred to leave the expensive enterprise of secondary and junior college education to the public sector.

Surveys of the attitudes of publics regarding the financing of private schools were made by Konrad (1961) for Alberta and British Columbia and by Ludwig (1970) following the introduction of government grants for private schools in Alberta. A comparison of the Konrad and Ludwig findings indicated that Departmental superintendents in 1969 were more favorable than they were in 1961 to the degree of financial support for private schools and also to the access of private schools to provincial educational resources such as film and audiovisual services. Konrad indicated that the provincial grant regulations for 1959 provided for some financial support to private schools offering schooling to children resident in unorganized territory. An example of such a service was that provided by the Holdeman Mennonites to the Sunchild Cree Indian Reserve at Rocky Mountain House for about twenty years until a modern school was erected by the government (Hiebert, 1971, p. 362).

Digout (1969) documented the political process whereby government grants for private schools in Alberta were initiated in 1967. One of the major actors was the Association of Private Schools and Colleges in Alberta (APSCA) which was formed in 1958 and in the same year submitted a brief to the Royal Commission on Education in Alberta. By 1964 its membership of 27 schools included most private schools other than the Jewish and the Seventh Day Adventist. That year the APSCA (1964) submitted a brief to the Cabinet in which a case was made for public funding of private schools and for providing for private school teachers to come under a pension plan similar to the Teachers' Retirement Fund. The latter was achieved in 1965, the former in 1967.

The APSCA was represented in the Advisory Committee on Private Schools and Colleges which was appointed by Cabinet order on December 30, 1958, and thus was able to exert its influence through direct channels. Two additional organizations, the Societies for Christian Education of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Christian Action Foundation were involved largely in informal activities (Digout, 1969).

A few days prior to the passing of Bill 29 on March 10, 1967, which provided for financial assistance to private schools, the Alberta Teachers' Association circulated a letter to Members of the Legislature registering its opposition to public funds for private schools. During its November 1967 meeting the Alberta School Trustees' Association indicated that it did "not support the principle of financial grants . . . to private schools" and included the resolution in its brief to the Cabinet on January 5, 1968 (Digout, p. 96). By contrast, preceding the passing of the Bill, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association in its July 15, 1966, brief to the Committee on School Centralization of the Legislature stated that "private schools with goals similar to ours are to be given state aid . . . we congratulate you as legislators upon your willingness to provide it" (Digout, p. 98).

Sloan (1980) has recorded the continuing political process whereby government grants for private schools have been increased substantially, but also whereby the School Act was amended in 1975 in order to allow for agreements to be established between public or separate school boards and private schools. An Ad Hoc Committee to Examine the Status of Private Schools in Alberta seems to have had a short life due to the inability of group representatives to agree on how to advise the Minister. The standing Advisory Committee on Private Schools and Colleges also was disbanded (p. 70).

Sloan (1980) showed that annual reports of the Department of Education made references to the contributions of private schools, such as to adult students, in isolated areas, for retarded children, and in the teaching of second languages. "Over the years," said Sloan, "the Department of Education has repeatedly expressed the view that these schools performed a very important function for the province and for the students involved" (p. 58).

Assheton-Smith and Toohey (1979) examined school-centered community conflict in two rural jurisdictions in which Holdeman Mennonites had withdrawn children from the public schools. Stronger acceptance of the Holdeman decision was found in the community in which Holdemans had settled as "pioneers" at the same time as other residents, than in a community to which they had moved more recently, bought farms, and subsequently affected the local public school by setting up their own private school. Also, the researchers found "a general feeling of discontent with the public schools as they are" among interviewed board members, almost all of whom indicated "agreement in some sense with the Mennonites' analysis and subsequent decision to withdraw their children" (p. 85).

If a review of the literature suggests anything at all, it may be that issues regarding private schools will at all times be in the public consciousness. They are the concern not only of private school clientele, but also that of teachers' and trustees' associations, district school boards and local communities. Except for Quebec and Manitoba, they have received minimal attention by royal commissions on education. However, they are repeatedly on the agenda of ministers of education and have become significant items in the platforms of political parties in some provinces. Finally, they intrigue academics and researchers.

Legal Setting for Private Schools

Section 93 of *The British North America Act* (1867) gave to the provinces the exclusive right to make laws in relation to education "in and for each province," subject to certain conditions. These conditions guaranteed Roman Catholics and Protestant rights to denominational schools in Quebec and Ontario and in other provinces where such schools existed "at the union" or were subsequently established "by law." Section 17 of *The Alberta Act* (1905) specifies that the expression "by law" shall be held to mean "the law as set out in the said chapters 29 and 30," that is, the Ordinances of the Northwest Territories passed in the year 1901. These Ordinances placed public and separate schools on an equal status. This provision for separate schools apparently has obviated the need for Catholic private schools in Alberta, whereas such are found in all provinces where the provision for separate schools did not exist or where such provision was recognized for elementary schools only.

The first mention of "private school" in Alberta legislation is found in a statute of 1910 (SA 1910 (2), c. 16, s.2). Reference to private schools in an annual report of the Department of Education was first made in 1919 (Sloan, 1980, p. 47). The first specific definition of a private school appeared in the legislation of 1955 (RSA 1955, c. 95, s. 8), which also gave to the Lieutenant Governor in Council the authority to "make regulations governing the establishment, operation and supervision of private schools" (s. 8).

Essentially, for a "private school" to be regarded as a "school," it must be approved by the Minister, it must be providing instruction for pupils who otherwise would be in attendance at a school operated by a local board or a

government agency, and it must be providing an instructional program approved by the Minister (SA 1979, c. 37, s. 4).

The Minister had been loathe to approve any private school which did not employ certificated teachers. The amended regulations of 1978 (A.R. 140/78) made allowance for such schools following the Oliver judgement (Bergen, 1978); however schools which do not employ certificated teachers do not receive a government grant. The new regulations provided for four classifications of private schools: category 1 schools, employing certificated teachers and providing instruction for pupils who would otherwise be attending schools operated by local school boards; category 2 schools, providing instruction for mentally, emotionally, or socially handicapped children; category 3 schools, providing instruction in a language other than English at times other than the normal operating hours of schools under school boards; and, category 4 schools, with the same purpose as category 1 schools, but not having certificated teachers.

The regulations require four conditions of persons or organizations desiring to operate a private school:

- 1) The reason for the establishment of a private school must be provided.
- 2) The buildings or premises must meet the requirements of the Minister.
- 3) The courses of study to be offered must be prescribed or approved by the Minister.
- 4) The maintenance of pupil enrollment and attendance records must be acceptable to the Minister.

Furthermore, *The School Act* was amended in 1975 to permit tuition agreements between school boards and private schools: "A board with the prior approval of the Minister may (a) enter into an agreement with . . . the operator of a private school for the provision of educational services" (s. 160). That is, the school board may provide educational services for the benefit of students enrolled in a private school, or it may accept educational services from a private school for students enrolled in schools under its control, or, indeed, a board may make arrangements to have children resident within its district enroll in a private school for instruction.

The foregoing examination indicates a gradual development in legislation concerning private schools from mere recognition — that is, providing for their operation under law — to an acceptance of private schools as equal in status to public schools in many respects.

Financial Provisions for Category One Private Schools

Quebec and Saskatchewan preceded Alberta in the introduction of provincial grants to private schools; to date such grants are available only to private high schools in Saskatchewan. Subsequently grants to private schools were introduced also in British Columbia and Manitoba. For the 1967-68 term a grant of \$100 per pupil was introduced in Alberta, increased to \$150 in 1970, to \$160 in 1972 and \$172 in 1973. In 1974 the formula was changed to allow for differential grants for elementary, junior high and senior high pupils, so that in each case the grant per private school pupil would be 33 1/3% of the per public school pupil grant. This proportion has been increased from year to year, standing at 75% for 1982.

The per pupil government grants to schools as of January 1, 1982, were as follows:

<i>Grades</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>
1 - 6	\$1596	\$1197
7 - 9	\$1673	\$1255
10 - 12	\$1916	\$1437

On the basis of the September 1980 enrollment in private schools, the grants to private schools in 1982 would total approximately nine million dollars. This constitutes a saving of about three million dollars for the provincial treasury, the additional amount in per pupil grants which would be paid to district boards if all such pupils were enrolled in public schools. If this saving were distributed to the public schools of the province, that would average about \$7.20 per public school pupil. If all of the grants paid to private schools were distributed instead to the public schools of the province, that would amount to about \$21.60 per pupil.

A compilation of statistics from Statistics Canada tables for 1975-76 indicated that for all private schools in Alberta the source of revenue was as follows: 6.3% from school boards; 28.3% from governments; 43.8% from pupil fees; and, 21.6% from other sources. Of all provincial grants to schools, about 0.3% went to the private sector which enrolled about 1.3% of all pupils in the province. By 1979 the proportion of provincial grants to private schools had increased to 0.6% whereas 1.7% of all pupils were enrolled in private schools.

To date per pupil grants amount to less than half the cost per pupil in the expenditures of public school boards. Presumably the cost per pupil in a private school would approximate that in a public school. Though the increased per pupil grants to private schools might encourage their establishment and development, their supporters must necessarily continue to hold a high measure of commitment.

Survey Study Procedure

Statistical information about the numbers of private schools and percentage of all students enrolled in private schools and the public funding of private schools was obtained from reports of Statistics Canada and the provincial Department of Education. Views regarding private schools were obtained by means of questionnaires directed to school boards, private schools, and parents of pupils attending private schools.

Questionnaires were mailed to the principals of all 95 schools in March, 1980. Two were returned undelivered. Of 93 presumably received by the schools, 42 were completed and returned. The percent response for each category is given in Table 1. Principals of private schools were asked to indicate in what way the objectives and program of their schools differed from schools under district boards. They were also asked to comment on discipline, admission policies, the nature of the staff and students, and on the sources of financial support.

A selected and stratified sample of 12 schools was chosen from the 32 responding schools in categories 1, 4, and the unapproved operating group, that is, schools which instruct pupils who otherwise would be attending regular schools under boards. The four responding schools in the latter group indicated that they had subsequently been approved as category 4 schools. In April, 1980, a total of 200 one-page questionnaires to parents were mailed to the principals of this

sample who were asked to have these forwarded to parents of their students. Parents were requested to return the questionnaire to the school or to mail it directly to the researcher. Most respondents returned these to the schools. The parents of at least eight of the schools responded. It was apparent that all 61 respondents were parents of children in denominational schools. As the returns were anonymous, the origin of some of these could not be determined. However, returns represented mainly parents whose children attended Christian, Seventh Day Adventist, and Baptist schools. No questionnaires were received from parents of secular schools. As no obvious differences could be determined from responses of parents representing different denominations, all responses were consolidated.

TABLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRES TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Category	Delivered	Returned	% Return
1. (equivalent to schools under District Boards)	48	23	47.9
2. (schools for the handicapped)	11	6	54.5
3. *(language schools operating outside of regular hours)	10	4	40.0
4. (similar to #1, but not approved for government grants)	11	5	45.5
Schools operating without the approval of the Minister	13	4	30.8
Total	93	42	45.2

*Pupils enrolled in category 3 schools for the purpose of learning a second language attend schools under District Boards during regular school hours.

The parents were asked to indicate their reasons for sending their children to private schools and also to suggest what changes in schools under district boards would meet their expectations.

Questionnaires were mailed to about 144 boards in the province through the office of the Alberta School Trustees' Association in March, 1980; 54 (37.5%) of the jurisdictions responded. It is not certain to what extent the returns reflected the actual view of board members as it was apparent that at least some of the returns had been completed by an officer of the district without consultation with the board.

School jurisdictions were asked to indicate what impact local private schools had on their programs, in what way they perceived their objectives to differ from those of private schools, what agreements or working arrangements had been implemented with private schools, and to express their attitudes and concerns regarding the growth in the private school sector.

Findings

Growth in the Private School Sector

Table 2 shows the percentage of all Alberta pupils enrolled in private schools for periods from 1919 to 1982.¹ The figures for Alberta have been consistently lower than those for all of Canada. The major explanation for this is the absence

of Catholic private schools in the province, a need met through the separate school districts which enrolled 17.2 percent of the pupil population for 1980-81. It is also of note that the proportions for Alberta, as well as for all of Canada, have varied little over half a century. For 1980-81 Quebec led with 7.2 percent of the provincial total enrollment in private schools. The other provinces which had a higher proportional enrollment in private schools than Alberta's 1.6 percent were Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island each had only 0.2 percent of all pupils enrolled in private schools. However, recent trends suggest a modest increase for Alberta as well as for a few other provinces. The introduction of Early Childhood Services by the Department of Education may have accounted for the drop in the pre-grade one enrollment in private schools following 1970.

TABLE 2
APPROVED PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND ENROLLMENTS, 1919-1982

Year	Number of Private Schools in Alberta ^a	Percent of all Alberta Pupils in Private Schools				Percent of all Pupils in Private Schools for Canada
		Pre-Grade 1	Elem.	Second.	Total	
1919-20	-	-	-	-	1.7	3.7
1929-30	25	-	-	-	2.1	4.4
1939-40	38	-	-	-	2.3	4.2
1949-50	39	-	-	-	2.1	4.7
1959-60	54	-	1.2	5.9	2.2	4.3
1964-65	45	4.3	1.0	3.6	2.2	4.1
1969-70	44	4.1	1.0	2.5	1.4	2.9
1974-75	40	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.1	3.2
1977-78	46	1.9	1.2	1.6	1.4	3.5
1978-79	57	-	-	-	1.7	3.7
1979-80	56	-	-	-	1.7	3.9
1980-81	61	-	1.4	2.3	1.6	4.2
1981-82	62	-	-	-	1.9	-

^aSchools for the handicapped and language schools are not included.

Sources: Compiled from reports of Statistics Canada and Alberta Education.

Enrollments in category one private schools and for all schools in the province are given for each grade in Table 3 for 1980. There was little variation in the proportion enrolled in private schools from grades one to ten. The higher proportion enrolled in grades eleven and twelve in private schools may be accounted for largely by the attraction of senior high students to the colleges (Canadian Union, Concordia, Camrose, and Alberta). Generally, private schools have been attracting pupils for all grades in similar proportions. Alberta College has consistently over the years accounted for a substantial proportion of the private school enrollment in the province. For 1981, Alberta College and Strathcona-Tweedsmuir alone accounted for about 75 percent of the enrollment in nonsectarian schools.

TABLE 3
CATEGORY ONE PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS
FOR SEPTEMBER 30, 1980

Grade	Private Schools	Provincial Total	Percent Private is of Total
1	506	37,149	1.4
2	499	34,353	1.5
3	455	33,921	1.3
4	526	34,841	1.5
5	500	35,407	1.4
6	550	34,602	1.6
Elem. Special Ed.	-	3,498	0.0
Total 1-6	3,036	213,772	1.4
7	549	34,655	1.6
8	523	35,021	1.5
9	467	33,781	1.4
Jr. High Special Ed.	1	2,837	0.0
Total 7-9	1,539	106,294	1.4
10	510	34,984	1.5
11	696	34,547	2.0
12	1,223	34,083	3.6
Sr. High Special Ed.	-	2,146	0.0
Total 10-12	2,429	105,760	2.3
All Grades	7,004	425,826	1.6

Source: Alberta Education Finance, Statistics and Legislation Branch.

The number of private high schools has remained the same from 1976 to 1982, one secular and five nonsecular. However, the number of nonsecular private schools which offered one or more high school grades beyond grade nine in addition to an elementary program increased from six to thirteen during that same period when the total number of approved private schools increased from 26 to 46.

Alberta's private schools may be classified according to the categories given in the regulations of the Department of Education. The number of schools in each category and the number of pupils enrolled are given in Table 4 for 1976-77 and 1981-82.

The most phenomenal growth in private schools occurred through the efforts of the Dutch Reformed Church (Brouwer, 1971). Its first school was opened at Lacombe in 1945 with 26 pupils in attendance. By 1960 the enrollment in the "Christian" schools had grown to 540, by 1970 to 1780, and by 1981 to about 2500. The denomination has opted for the strong tradition of private schools prevailing in the country of its origin.

Of the 391 pupils in the category 3 second language schools for 1981-82, 260 were enrolled in 4 German schools, 92 in 2 Ukrainian schools, 32 in an Italian school and 7 in a Lithuanian school. Instruction in French as a second language is provided in many of the public and separate schools under boards. Category 3 language schools operate during evenings or on Saturdays. Their pupils attend regular schools under district boards for instruction in the regular school program.

TABLE 4
PRIVATE SCHOOLS: CATEGORIES AND ENROLLMENTS

Category	1976 - 1977		1981 - 1982		1976 - 1981
	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	Percent Enrollment Increase
Category 1 Schools (approved for grants)					
Nonsecular Schools					
Christian (Dutch Reformed)	9	1931	9	2515	30.2
Seventh Day Adventist	8	728	8	829	13.9
Lutheran	3	355	3	495	39.4
Hutterite	3	33	0	0	0.0
All others	6	696	19	2227	220.0
Nonsecular: Totals	29	3743	39	6066	62.1
Secular Schools	7	1309	7	1460	11.5
Category 1: Totals	36	5052	46	7526	49.0
Category 4 Schools (non-grant rec.)	0	0	16	530 ^E	-
Category 2 Schools (for handicapped)	11	780	12	800 ^E	-
Category 3 Schools (language)					
German	4	307	4	260	-15.3
Ukrainian	1	109	2	92	-15.6
Italian	1	51	1	32	-37.3
Lithuanian	0	0	1	7	-
Language Schools: Totals	6	467	8	391	-16.3
Unapproved Private Schools	?	?	18 ^E	?	-

^E Estimates

Source: Compiled from Alberta Education documents.

Ten of the 16 category 4 schools have been established by the Holdeman Mennonites. Any category 4 school which employs certificated teachers may qualify as a category 1 school after one year of operation and subsequently receive the government per pupil grants available to private schools.

Category 2 schools for the handicapped qualify for special specified government grants. Children in category 2 schools normally would not find adequate services in regular schools under district boards. Private schools for the mentally handicapped were reported as early as 1920 (Sloan, 1980).

About 18 unapproved private schools were operating in the province during 1981-82. One of these, providing instruction to about 150 pupils in grades 1 to 12, is alleged to have been operating since 1939. Although the *Department of Education Act* (section 8) provides for a fine "not exceeding \$500" for the operation of a private school without the approval of the Minister, there appears to be no evidence of convictions in recent years.

Table 4 indicates further that although increased enrollments occurred in all groups of category one private schools, the numerical growth was most prominent

for Dutch Reformed and other Christian schools. No additional Dutch Reformed nor Seventh Day Adventist and Lutheran private schools were established during this five-year period, but 13 additional schools were opened by other Christian associations. To date no denominational private schools other than those of Christian persuasion have been established. Three Hebrew private schools had been established, which enrolled as many as 790 pupils in 1968. However, all three (two in Calgary and one in Edmonton) have been incorporated as alternative schools under the respective public school boards. For example, the Talmud Torah private school, established in 1912, became an alternative school under the Edmonton Public School Board in 1975 (Sloan, 1980). A small number of secular and other nonsecular private schools have in recent years obtained similar status. Of the 19 "other" nonsecular schools, seven had enrollments below 50, nine between 50 and 150, and three had more than 300 each.

The few Hutterite private schools have reverted back to being public schools under district boards. Private instruction in language and religion occurs in all schools on Hutterite colonies under the direction of the colony leadership before and/or after school hours. The regular school program is taught by a certificated teacher appointed by the public board in whose jurisdiction the colony is situated. Generally, the formal schooling of a Hutterite child is terminated upon his reaching the age of 15 when he begins an "apprenticeship" in the work-life of the colony.

Because of the small numbers in language schools, it is impossible to interpret the proportional drop in the enrollment in 1981 over 1976 as being meaningful. However, it can be noted that during a five-year period the commitment to second language learning appears not to have increased among the supporters of these schools.

Reasons for the Establishment of Private Schools

A list of 95 private schools was released by the Alberta Department of Education in early 1980. Fourteen of these were unapproved at the time, though all but five of these had already applied for approval under the terms of category 4.

As schools in categories 2 and 3 are of less immediate concern to public school systems, these are here given casual consideration only. Six questionnaires were returned from category 2 schools which serve pupils with physical, mental, and social handicaps. These schools were established by parents and associations to meet a need which had not been provided by the district school systems. Substantial public financial support for these institutions is of recent origin. Many still rely heavily upon private donations. Some have tuition agreements with school boards whose resident pupils are being served. One of the reporting schools indicated that it had recently come under the jurisdiction of the local school board and another anticipated such a move.

Category 3 schools were established to serve the interest of language groups. A Ukrainian school was founded as early as 1956, a German school in 1966, and an Italian school in 1972. Respondents indicated that about one-third of costs were covered through public funding and that the remainder was raised through donations and fees. Generally, these schools were able to use district school facilities without cost as they operated during non-school hours. A French language school, which received Early Childhood Education grants, has recently become a category 1 school and offers a French immersion program for full-time students.

Secular or nonsectarian schools. Two of the seven private nonsectarian schools responded. One of these, the Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School, is listed among Canadian private elitist schools and is the only such school in Alberta (Gossage, 1977). Its principal is a member of the Canadian Headmasters' Association. Its fees, including transportation costs, approached \$3000 per annum. Its objective is "the development of mind, body and spirit to the greatest potential of the individual" and to "show students the way" with respect to "ethical and moral values." Parental participation is expected. Admission depends on the "academic potential" and the "citizenship qualities" of the applicant, and the school reserves the right to dismiss any student "whose scholarship, conduct or cooperation is unsatisfactory." Provincial grants covered approximately 20% of the cost of operating the school.

Another of the nonsectarian schools also controlled the admission of students on the basis of "quality," but managed to operate on a fee of \$500 per student. It claimed not to give religious instruction but to practise the Christian ethic in living. The respondent indicated a preference to have the school operate as an alternate school under a public school board.

Alberta College enrolled about two-thirds of all students in nonsectarian private schools. As in the schools mentioned above, no religious test is applied to either instructional staff or students. The only formal link to the United Church is through its board of governors which, in practice, also appoints a member of the United Church as its president. The College offers a congenial setting for mature students to continue or resume their secondary education.

Denominational or nonsecular private schools. For the year 1980-81 about 50% of all students attending nonsecular schools were enrolled in "Christian" schools (the schools of the Dutch Reformed church) and about 13% in Seventh Day Adventist schools.

School responses to the questionnaire were characterized more by their similarities than by their differences. Generally speaking, responses from SDA schools tended to be more "conservative" in terms of expressed value orientation and the Lutheran schools more "liberal."

Reasons for the establishment of a private school such as the following were repeated by most respondents:

- To impart knowledge of the Bible.
- To teach children according to the wishes of the parents.
- To provide a Christian context and environment for all instruction.
- To provide an instructional setting in which the cooperation of home, church and school can be obtained.
- To provide children with a Christian philosophy of life.
- To promote reverence for God and kindness and tolerance to men.
- To provide Christian education to the children of the members of the church.

School calendars contained statements such as the following:

The ideal of establishing Christian day schools as an alternative to the public schools was based on the conviction that all of life is under the direction of God and His word.
... the fundamental unity of the school and the home must be maintained.

J. J. Bergen

Christian education has its foundations in the Creator-creature relationship as taught in the Scriptures

The responsibility for education rests upon the parents.

Education is more than a process of learning.

Most respondents indicated that staff members were committed to a personal interest in individual students, that individual responsibility was stressed, and that pupils were encouraged to become "disciples of Christ." One calendar statement stated that "neither permissiveness nor authoritarianism is a Biblical approach to authority and parenting." However, the general nature of responses indicated a tendency toward authoritarianism. Some of the schools indicated that corporal punishment was permitted when deemed necessary. Parents were generally enjoined to be supportive of the school and its staff in matters of discipline. The importance of student obedience was stressed. Some of the school calendars contained lists of "do's" and "don'ts" with respect to such matters as proper deportment, modest dress, questionable entertainment, profane language, and obscene literature. Teacher models were desired for good school discipline.

Most of the responding schools indicated that a proportion of students came from homes outside of the denomination or affiliation of the school. Some indicated that in order to keep the denominational character of the school, the proportion of such numbers was restricted to about fifteen percent. However, for some schools this proportion was as high as forty percent. For most schools admission depended largely on the willingness of both the pupil and the parent to be supportive of the program and policies of the school and to be in agreement with the instruction the child would receive. For example, one calendar stated that parents must sign a statement permitting the child "to be taught in keeping with the purpose and program of the school and indicating noninterference with the Christian direction of the school."

Only a few schools drew any significant proportion of their students from beyond the boundaries of the public school jurisdiction in which the schools were located.

For most denominational schools, membership in the respective denomination was a requirement for teachers. For a few, though not required, it was desired. Hutterite private schools did not have "their own" teachers. Their schools enjoyed the isolation of the colony. The provincial school program was taught by certificated non-Hutterite teachers. Religious instruction was given by a member of the colony. However, the five Hutterite private schools operating in 1980 have since all become schools under district boards.

The category 4 Holdeman Mennonite schools did not differ substantially from others in the nature of their responses. However, teachers were required to be members of the denomination, and very few of these were certificated. This is due largely to a movement of relatively recent origin to eschew institutions of higher education, including teacher education faculties, because of the belief that persons who graduate from such institutions no longer are able to impart the values and beliefs of the Holdeman church. This concern first arose among the congregations of the denomination in the United States.

Government funding in 1980 met from one-third to half of the operating costs of most category 1 nonsecular schools. The remainder was raised through donations and fees. Fees varied considerably. Some schools had a per student fee,

others a per family fee. For some schools the fee per pupil was as high as \$1000 per annum.

Some of the schools reported good relationships with boards in that consulting services (and in some cases some resource materials) were provided by the public school district. For some, facilities such as the swimming pool or the physical gymnasium were made available to their students. One Lutheran school indicated a tuition agreement under which it provided grade 12 to several County students.

Returns from parents of children in private schools. The 61 parent respondents represented 131 pupils, or an average of 2.2 students per parent. These pupils were distributed as follows:

Grades	Number	Percent
K - 3	39	30
4 - 6	44	33
7 - 9	31	24
10 - 12	17	13

46% of the respondents indicated that their children had also attended a public school, and 54% that theirs had attended a private school only.

The one-page questionnaire to parents included the statement: "Please list the reasons which motivated you to send your children to the private school of your choice?" In order of frequency, the following were listed:

- 39 — To provide their children with a Bible or Christian oriented education.
- 32 — A school providing a Christian environment and Christian teachers.
- 15 — Avoidance of an environment in which students are tempted with smoking, alcohol, and in which values are undefined or ill defined.
- 11 — Good discipline.
- 10 — A unity of home and school with respect to purpose and direction of education.
- 10 — A school with a concern for the pupils as individuals.

Most parent respondents did not think that it would be possible for the public schools to meet their needs. In order of frequency, the following reasons were given:

- 16 — A school which has to maintain a neutral position cannot be expected to meet the needs of special groups.
- 16 — The modern school's values are that of secular humanism.
- 14 — Biblical oriented teaching cannot be given in the public school.
- 8 — Prayer and religious instruction is lacking in the public school.
- 7 — There is a lack of general authority and an absence of role models of authority and an absence of good school discipline.
- 6 — The emphasis on evolution pervades the instruction of science.
- 3 — Classes are too large for effective instruction.
- 1 — The public school system appears to suffer from general apathy.

Concerns of School Boards

About 45 private schools were reported to be operating in 25 of the 54 responding school districts. Eight respondents reported a substantial drop in enrollment in district schools and a consequent loss in government per pupil grants. Program offerings in some schools had been curtailed due to lower enrollments. City district respondents, however, generally reported little observable impact on their own programs and funding.

At least four respondents reported tuition agreements with private schools. One city system reported that two private schools had been incorporated as alternative schools in the system. Resource allocation was identical to that for other public schools in the district, and the per pupil provincial grant was being received by the board. In each case the original founders of the school continued in an advisory capacity and were consulted with respect to staffing and program objectives. However, such arrangements were claimed to consume an inordinate amount of administrative and supervisory time in comparison with services provided to regular schools within the system.

Sloan (1980) documents one case of an "umbrella" agreement in which both the County of Camrose and Camrose Lutheran College benefited from increased government grants. In the agreement, signed April 4, 1978 and renewed for the following year, the County of Camrose received the full per student grant for each resident student registered at the College, and paid to the College 85 percent of the grant for educational services received by the student (p. 225).

A board may also take over the jurisdiction of a private school as an alternative school in the district. The school is able to carry on with its individual program and have a school committee which acts in an advisory capacity to the board. In this manner the Caraway Creative Learning Center and the Talmud Torah School became alternative schools under the direction of the Edmonton Public School Board in 1975 (Sloan, p. 124). The Talmud Torah School, for example, is "open only to those students who are committed to the entire school program, including the Hebrew language and Jewish religious studies" (p. 211). Negotiations between the Edmonton Board and the Edmonton Society for Christian Education between 1975 and 1977 arrived at a stalemate when the Society failed to agree to submit to ultimate Board authority in matters of staffing and curriculum (p. 136).

The Immanuel Christian School was unable to get the approval of an agreement with the Lethbridge Catholic Separate School District as the Minister ruled that most of the students of the private school were residents of the public rather than of the separate district (p. 141). The public board of the County of Lethbridge was not interested in an agreement with Immanuel as it felt the major issue to be that of public funding, and that the private school ought to get such directly from the provincial government rather than indirectly through the public school board (p. 144).

As of February, 1982, five alternative schools operated under the umbrella of the public school board in Calgary: two Hebrew schools, the Plains Indian Survival School, a special academic high school, and the Christian Logos school. The Logos school was reported to have a long waiting list of parents who wished to enroll their children (Weatherbe & Geddes, 1982).

When asked whether the private school movement ought to be permitted to take its course under current provincial provisions, 11 of the 42 district

respondents were in apparent agreement, 12 in conditional agreement and 19 in disagreement. Conditional statements referred to a desirable requirement that an alternative be practical and economical within a jurisdiction, that a private school meet all standards required of a public school, and that a private school should not be subsidized unless it practised an open admission policy. Boards of separate school districts were inclined to favor the freedom of parents to choose private schools for their children. One respondent stated: "Our Board believes that parents have the right to choose the type of schools they wish their children to attend." Another believed that "private schools can complement the public system which cannot be all things to all people." One respondent wrote that:

It is difficult for any of us to object to the increase in grants, particularly to denominational schools, on philosophical grounds. Catholic Separate schools enjoy 100% funding from Alberta Education and we are a denominational group.

This statement is in consort with the position taken by the Roman Catholic Trustees' Association in 1966 quoted earlier in this paper.

Although some respondents felt that public school boards might make adjustments or accommodations to parents now opting for the private school, about the same number of respondents did not see any solution in the dilemma. The wants and demands of some of the groups are particular in terms of denominational doctrine and could not be satisfied within the context of a public school. One respondent explained that in his jurisdiction four private schools had been established to serve the particular needs of as many different "Christian" denominations.

Several respondents expressed concern that private schools could control and restrict admissions whereas the public school had to serve all, including those rejected by the private school. Others opposed the financing of private schools which in their opinion promoted elitism and fragmentation. Several respondents indicated the need of at least a full year to plan adjustments prior to the actual opening of a private school. In one county the current trend was seen to lead to a situation where private school supporters would be numerous enough to elect sufficient representation to county council so that they would in fact also be in charge of the public school system!

Resolutions passed by the Alberta School Trustees' Association in 1981 urged the Government of Alberta "to delay any further increase in funding . . . to private schools until a thorough study has been undertaken to assess the nature and extent of the impact of such funding on the operation of public schools" and "to increase the present funding to school boards whose pupil population has been affected by the establishment of private schools within their jurisdiction" (Resolutions 1.DA.01-02, 1981). The ASTA Task Force on Private Schools has continued its deliberations during 1981 and 1982.

By contrast, more adamant was the position of the Alberta Teachers' Association in its 1981 resolution (confirming earlier similar resolutions of 1961, 1967, 1970 and 1975) in which it opposed "the expenditure of public funds for either direct or indirect support of private schools except those which are operated by a society or an association for handicapped pupils and which maintain a standard of instruction acceptable to the Minister" (The Alberta Teachers' Association, 1981, p. 188).

Discussion

Observations which can be made from school and parent returns are:

1. there is general acceptance of the provincial prescribed curriculum, but it is to be taught from a particular value perspective;
2. there is general support of well prepared and certificated teachers, but such instructors are to exemplify a definite Christian commitment;
3. private schools are to prepare useful and honest citizens, but such citizens are to have a Christian value commitment and perspective of life and society.

The secular or nonsectarian schools would neglect none of the virtues desired by the nonsecular schools, but the emphasis would likely be humanistic rather than doctrinaire Christian. Good scholarship, excellence, and discipline would be stressed. In most denominational, nonsectarian or secular private schools the nonconforming student would be tolerated less than in most public schools.

It is of interest to note that boards raised no concerns about private schools for the handicapped. Such schools take care of problem cases boards are ill equipped to handle. However, boards generally objected to private schools bleeding off students at the other end of the continuum, the academic and the motivated. If boards truly wish to claim that they can adequately serve all and that the school population ought not to be fragmented, it appears to follow that their actions would be consistent if they also assumed the task currently being borne by private schools for the handicapped.

It is apparent from the returns of 54 school systems that there is no consensus among respondents regarding private schools. The weight of opinion arising from these returns is only slightly in opposition to the trend in private school developments. It appears that public school administrators and elected representatives generally accept the existence and continued development of private schools as a political reality. At best, opinion would indicate that there is a need for improved provincial policy which might provide for reasonable control of the movement and at the same time provide for sufficient funding of public schools during the time adjustments have to be made until a point of operational equilibrium is reestablished.

Legislation governing private schools could be amended in order to allow for a more orderly control of developments. The direct access to the Minister makes him subject to the subtle influence of pressure groups. A statutory advisory commission, such as is found in Quebec, could provide the Minister with a more objective evaluation of each application. It seems reasonable that local school boards who are affected ought to be consulted before a decision is made. Another alternative would be a form of statutory control committees, similar to those found in British Columbia, which could assume responsibility for the quality of private school programs and for making recommendations with respect to the degree of appropriate funding.

Private school supporters also pay their share of the local property tax and the provincial income tax. They do in fact save the public money. A case can be made that they ought to have a measure of public support when they opt for private education. However, the question may well be raised whether a private school which receives public funds should have the right to be discriminatory in its admission policies. West German law, for example, permits no discrimination

based on the ability of a family to pay. Discriminatory admission policies may need to be scrutinized carefully, particularly for schools receiving public funds.

Outside of Quebec, the public funding of private schools in Canada is of recent origin. About half of Canada's private schools do not receive government assistance. The relatively strong growth in private education in British Columbia preceded the introduction of government grants. Erickson (1979) surmised that public schools may have "obtained a lot of material benefits . . . in a manner that often diminishes the things money cannot buy, such as commitment, consensus, community, accomplishment, and exceptionality." He speculated, if "public money has done much to ruin public schools" (p. 17), whether public funding may do the same harm to private schools.

An increasingly pluralistic and urbanized society requires a common or public school which essentially must differ from the school of several decades ago that served a less heterogeneous community. Some private schools seek to recapture the unity of home, school, church and community which characterized many a public school in the long-gone days of the one-room country school. For example, the Holdeman Mennonites of Alberta might not have opted for the private school, had centralization not taken place following the establishment of larger school divisions.

The creation of larger local government units was one factor in shifting the "point of equilibrium" in the social, educational, economic and political milieu of this province. The growth in private schools is another. A number of adjustments will have to be worked out by government, by school boards, by public schools, and also by teacher and school trustee associations. A greater freedom in educational choice is not without its accompanying costs and hazards. Whereas the freedom of parents to choose an alternative education for their children may be tolerated, in the interest of the child and his future the adequacy of that alternative requires careful scrutiny.

Conclusion

Private schools have been established to provide for handicapped children and language interest groups at a time when the public school system had not realized an obligation. The definition of needs may be extended to include the academic, the spiritual, and group value orientations. Human rights legislation and related education statutes provide considerable freedom for a parent to choose how and where his child shall be educated. Legislation reflects the will of the legislature, and legislative decisions are, in part, responses to the needs and pressures of population segments which diverge in value orientations. The pluralistic social and political milieu of this day is not likely to permit the introduction of severe restrictions on any existing liberties. Furthermore, private schools may not only serve as an available alternative to those who are not satisfied with the public school, but may also serve as a stimulant to keep public schools more alert in improving what they are already doing. Any imposed constraints must serve to facilitate the keeping of an essential order and perspective within the total educational setting of the province.

Notes

1. The various sources from which this and succeeding tables are compiled vary in detail. For example, Alberta College has been classified some years as a denominational school and other years as a secular school. In these tables it is consistently included among secular schools. Other statistics with respect to the number of private schools and the number of pupils enrolled are not always reported consistently in various reports. These tables, however, are sufficiently precise to reflect reality adequately.

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J. J. Bergen

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